



Morning Alert - Thursday, October 12, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most TV networks led with reports that a U.S. CH-53 transport helicopter made an emergency landing near the Northern Training Area several hundred meters from a residential area in Okinawa and burst into flames in the early evening on Wednesday. The networks showed footage of plumes of black smoke rising from the helicopter. TBS led with a report on the upcoming general election.

All national dailies gave top play to their projections for the Oct. 22 Lower House election, saying that the ruling coalition could win nearly 300 seats.

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump to meet with abductees' families during Japan visit

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that it has learned from several sources connected to U.S.-Japan relations that arrangements are being made for President Trump to meet with the families of the Japanese abductees, including the parents of Megumi Yokota, during his scheduled trip to Japan in November. The paper speculated that the President plans to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea over its human rights violations by expressing his full support for Japan in resolving the abduction issue. The paper also wrote that the U.S. and Japanese governments are making arrangements for the President to visit Japan either on Nov. 4-7 or Nov. 5-7 and exploring the possibility of arranging a meeting with the abductees' families during that period while taking into consideration the health condition of the Yokotas.

Defense Secretary Mattis to visit South Korea

Asahi wrote that it has learned from a source connected to U.S.-ROK relations that Secretary of Defense Mattis is planning to visit South Korea later this month to attend regular bilateral security

talks in Seoul. Noting that Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan will visit South Korea next week and President Trump is also planning to visit the nation in early November, the paper speculated that Washington and Seoul are aiming to demonstrate their solidarity to North Korea through these high-level visits.

Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan to visit Japan next week

Mainichi wrote that MOFA announced on Wednesday that Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan will visit Japan on Oct.16-17 for talks with his Japanese counterpart Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama on North Korea. Yomiuri added that the U.S. and Japanese officials will also discuss preparations for President Trump's planned visit to Japan in November. The ministry also announced that Sugiyama will visit Seoul on Oct. 17-18 for trilateral talks with Deputy Secretary Sullivan and their ROK counterpart Lim on North Korea.

U.S. conducts "freedom of navigation" operations in South China Sea

Wednesday evening's Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that a U.S. Navy source said on Tuesday that the USS Chafee, a Hawaii-based guided missile destroyer, sailed near the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea that are effectively controlled by China on Tuesday. The papers wrote that the move was part of the U.S.'s "freedom of navigation" operations, which are intended to counter China's construction of military bases in the region. Asahi wrote that although the U.S. is seeking China's cooperation in dealing with North Korea, it has demonstrated an unwavering position on issues related to the South China Sea. However, according to the source, the destroyer did not come within 12 nautical miles of artificial islands – the range that China regards as its territorial waters. Noting that a U.S. vessel entered waters within 12 miles of the islands during similar operations in August, the paper speculated that Washington showed a degree of consideration to China this time in view of the need for cooperation with Beijing.

SECURITY

U.S. military helicopter bursts into flames when making emergency landing in Okinawa

Asahi, Mainichi, and Tokyo Shimbun front-paged reports saying that according to the Ministry of Defense, a U.S. military Futenma-based CH-53 transport helicopter burst into flames when it made an emergency landing on privately-owned land near the Northern Training Area in Okinawa at around 5:20 p.m. on Wednesday. None of the helicopter's seven crewmembers or local citizens were injured in the incident. The U.S. Marines announced on Wednesday that the helicopter made an emergency landing after catching fire midflight and that they are investigating the cause of the incident. Defense Minister Onodera told reporters that Japan will call on the U.S. military to ensure the safe operation of its aircraft. Director General Nakajima of the Defense Ministry's Okinawa defense bureau called on Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson to conduct a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident and take measures to prevent a recurrence. Prime Minister Abe said

in a TV program that the accident was very regrettable. The papers wrote that local citizens expressed strong concern over operations of U.S. military aircraft, noting that the helicopter that crashed on Wednesday is the same type that crashed on Okinawa International University in 2004. Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei ran similar reports in their city news sections.

POLITICS

Ruling coalition projected to win 300 seats in Lower House

All papers gave top play to their projections for the results of the Oct. 22 general election based on opinion surveys and field research. The papers wrote that the LDP appears likely to gain a majority of the 465 seats in the Lower House and that it will probably win over 300 seats together with its coalition partner Komeito party. The Party of Hope led by Tokyo Governor Koike has apparently been unsuccessful in winning strong support from voters, as it appears likely to gain only around 60 seats. The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan may take 30 seats or more.

